



Charlie's Stollery Story

It all began in early January 2017 when Charlie complained of a sore arm. We didn't think much of it, as he often gets growing pains. However, over the course of the month, it seemed to get worse. He would wake up in the middle of the night crying. Since we couldn't get him to see his doctor before our holidays, I had one booked after we returned.

As an active six-year-old boy, Charlie was having a great time in the sun and pools. But as the days passed, he was unable to lift his arms. By the time we got home, it was clear that something was seriously wrong. We visited his doctor, but he didn't initially think much of it, as there were no physical signs of a sprain or bruise. He advised us to get an X-ray just to be sure.

After the X-ray was done, the physician gave us a sealed letter and instructed us to go straight to the Stollery the next morning with it. Whatever the letter said, it must have been quite serious, as they immediately sent him for MRI and CT scans. We had limited information about the situation, but we quickly caught on when we were informed that he had a hole the size of a dime on his right shoulder. They informed us that it was likely some form of cancer, but they needed to perform more tests to confirm. We were immediately admitted to the cancer ward.

After a long and frustrating diagnosis, it was discovered that he had a rare form of cancer called LCH (Langerhans cell histiocytosis is a rare, cancer-like condition that occurs when the body produces too many immature Langerhans cells, a type of immune cell. These cells can build up and damage organs, tissue, and bones, or form tumors called granulomas). He was the second person diagnosed in Alberta at the time. Since it was a rare form of cancer, a team of oncologists was involved. After their research, they decided to monitor him for a while before we decided on the best course of treatment. We were going through a range of emotions as a family. We had gone from a state of bliss to despair within a week after returning from our holidays. Since we live 1.5 hours from Edmonton, they allowed us to stay in the ward for two weeks. We slept in chairs or on benches with his six-month-old newborn sister.

Amidst all these challenges, the staff was incredibly supportive and understanding. They did everything they could to make us feel comfortable. In the initial months, Charlie was prescribed pain medications and required visits every two weeks. Gradually, the frequency decreased to once a month. Over time, the hole gradually closed. One of the key points about LCH is that it can heal on its own, although it's rare. In Charlie's case, the hole fully closed within a year. We were incredibly grateful that our experienced oncologist team chose to wait before initiating immediate treatment. Their research helped us avoid unnecessary procedures that could have caused him further pain. We are fortunate to have one of the best children's hospitals in Edmonton, Alberta. It's a place filled with compassionate and knowledgeable staff who prioritize providing the best possible care and creating supportive environments for both patients and their families. In 2022, Charlie achieved full remission. He is now an active and healthy 14-year-old teenager.

Football is his passion. He eats and sleeps football. We are so thankful that he was given another chance at life. Without the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation, this story could have had a different outcome. We have supported numerous fundraising events to express our gratitude for this remarkable organization. While we pray that we never need such places again, we are grateful that they exist. We are also eternally grateful to the staff and team of doctors who provided unwavering support during our most challenging moments.